

Intimate Golf Talks

Dunn and Jessup



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Intimate Golf Talks



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The back swing for an explosion shot out of a bunker.

Intimate Golf Talks

By
John Duncan Dunn

Los Angeles Country Club

with

Elon Jessup

Associate Editor of *Outing*

45520

With 82 Illustrations

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APPENDIX TO VOLUME
HOWARD ROBERTSON



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To
ALBERT BRITT
Editor of *Outing*

From a Medieval Scottish Pastime Golf Has
Come Into National Prominence

FOREWORD

HOW THIS BOOK CAME TO BE WRITTEN

Pulnam.
220
1923

WHEN John Duncan Dunn was the head of a large indoor golf school in New York it happened to be my privilege as Associate Editor of *Outing* to interview him upon some small matter relating to the game. I learned what I wished to know and left with the usual reportorial haste. It seemed but a passing interview. But fortunately I had remained long enough to watch the way of Mr. Dunn with one of his pupils. It was golf instruction of a distinctly different sort from what I had ever come across before. A few days later upon mulling the matter over I went back to see him again.

Such was the beginning of these golf talks by Mr. Dunn. My interest was twofold: to

FOREWORD

improve my own mediocre game and at the same time see that the instructor's valuable suggestions became printed words. These talks are something more than interviews. They are the direct results of actual situations. I was the average golf duffer burdened with more than an average number of golfing faults of years' standing. The ghost of this same duffer, club in hand, stalks through the following pages. Mr. Dunn's words in great part are inspired by the sight of this actual exhibit out of which he is attempting to make a real golfer.

During the course of my golf lesson interviews with Mr. Dunn, both indoors and out, I often thought of a favourite professor of my college days. We students had thoroughly learned our subject under this professor. We couldn't help ourselves. He showed us that seemingly difficult things are usually amazingly simple; he had the knack of sorting out important and relatively unimportant matters and assigning each to its respective groove. Very often he would repeat a thing which

FOREWORD

another teacher under like conditions would dismiss as an accomplished fact. He stuck to a subject until we knew it thoroughly.

Philosophy 4 and the game of golf may or may not have much in common, but I have found that in both cases the methods of teaching can be the same. Mr. Dunn's common sense attitude greatly resembles the favourite professor's. He makes golf seem amazingly simple; he clearly shows you the difference between an essential and a non-essential. There may be golfers who can make a better score on the links than John Duncan Dunn, but I am thoroughly convinced there is not a man living who knows more about golf and how to teach it.

ELON JESSUP.

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TALK I
PICKING THE RIGHT CLUBS

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

TALK I

PICKING THE RIGHT CLUBS

HAVE you ever seen a carpenter buy a new plane? Ever noticed how finicky he is about it? He balances and sights it for a long time before he makes up his mind that it is all right; and then perhaps he suddenly decides that it won't do. The plane may be a perfect piece of workmanship, but it has just fallen short of the final test in the hands of the good workman. It has failed to strike a certain responsive chord in his make-up. With this last word of co-operation between tool and man lacking, the carpenter knows that with this

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particular plane he will never be able to turn out the best work of which he is capable.

“Where’s the connection between carpenters’ tools and golf clubs?” queried the interviewing golf pupil.

Just this: exactly the same lesson of good workmanship can be applied to the selection of golf clubs. Consider well the tools of the game. Do not underestimate the importance of having the right clubs in your golf bag. Even the best player cannot put up the best game of which he is capable unless his clubs suit him to a T; although of course the clubs themselves may be perfect and another man will make championship play with them. And if a good player is set off his base by the wrong clubs, you can imagine the havoc they work with the beginner’s game.

This matter of suitable clubs is something about which most golfers go wrong at one time or other. The unfortunate part of it is that most of the new men at the game start wrong, and then stay wrong. Perhaps after you have learned to play the game just passably well

PICKING THE RIGHT CLUBS

with entirely unsuitable clubs, some kind friend politely asks if the shaft of your midiron isn't a trifle long for a man of your medium height; with the result that you switch to a club that you should have been playing with right along. But does your game improve? Not much. It probably goes from bad to worse, the reason being that you have learned with the wrong club, become accustomed to it, and now can't play with the right one.

This talk about playing with the wrong clubs cheered the listener up quite a bit. It was something tangible upon which he could place the blame for a distinctly mediocre game.

The surest word of advice I can give a beginner is to start with the right clubs. This eliminates one big obstacle at one fell swoop. Even though the game comes a little slowly he knows at any rate that his clubs are right and he can devote his time to other worries. For a perfect jumble of misfits I commend you to the golf bag of almost any beginner. Yes, and old timers at the game, too.

You will often find a large-headed brassie of

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flat lie in the same bag with a small-headed driver of medium lie. They haven't any more



FIG. 1

A brassie and driver that fight with each other. One is small-headed, the other large-headed, and the lies are different.

Don't allow them in the same bag

business being together than a cricket bat in a baseball outfit. Sometimes the clubs in a golf bag fairly fight with one another (Fig. 1).

PICKING THE RIGHT CLUBS

As a matter of fact, a set of golf clubs should be one harmonious family. They should all have something in common and not be of entirely different natures. I even recommend that all the iron clubs in a bag be the product of one manufacturer for then you are fairly sure of uniformity of construction.

Go through your bag on the lookout for a club that is the least bit out of kilter with the rest of your club family, a discordant note. Throw out any disturber of the family concert, even though you may look upon the discordant one as a favourite child.

This was too much. Throw away a favourite club indeed! Where was the man's heart? And come to think of it, there was a certain mashie in the interviewer's bag that didn't just seem to belong.

I say get rid of the discordant club, for it is breaking the rhythm. Likely enough it is throwing you off your game.

Just to show how beginners get started on the wrong track, let me mention the case of a man who came to me to take lessons not long

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ago. After deciding to learn the game, this busy business man sent his wife to a sporting goods store with a *carte blanche* order for a set of clubs. She did the selecting. And as he was a six footer and she a mite of a woman, you can well imagine the incongruous result.

In contrast to this, I remember another man who took just one lesson with me. He didn't touch the ball once, but instead spent the whole time selecting suitable clubs. He was a wise man.

Sometimes, I think it would be a good thing for a man to learn golf without any clubs at all—if such a thing were possible. Certainly his judgment after he has mastered the golf swing is vastly different from what it was before. Once he has decided to take up golf, he should have someone who knows the game thoroughly pick out his set for him (Fig. 2).

Failing this, he would do well to confine his first selection to four clubs: spoon, midiron, mashie, and putter (Fig. 3). These four will carry him through the first season very nicely.

PICKING THE RIGHT CLUBS

The following season he will be able to tackle the rest of the set more intelligently.

At this point the pupil confessed to a stupen-

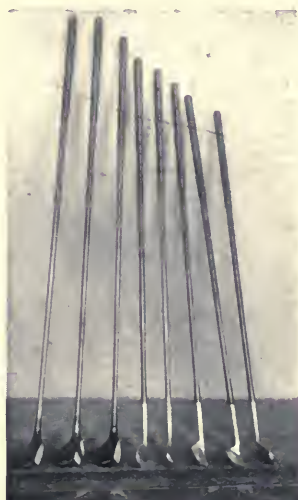


FIG. 2

A complete set of clubs. Left to right:
Driver, brassie, spoon, driving iron,
midiron, mashie, niblick, putter

dous amount of ignorance as to just how he would go about it to select a suitable set of clubs.

First, there is the question of balance. Everybody wants a well balanced club, but not everybody recognizes one. Some people

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are what is known as "susceptible to balance." They can pick up a golf club and even though they have never had one in their hands before,



FIG. 3

The clubs that will start you upon your golfing career. Unless you wish to look and feel real jaunty, these are plenty. Left to right: spoon, midiron, mashie, putter

they instinctively know that it is well balanced. A poorly balanced club will be to them as a discord is to an accomplished singer. No general rule can be laid down as to how to pick out good balance, although nearly any-

PICKING THE RIGHT CLUBS

body can instinctively tell extreme instances of off-balance (Fig. 4).

Have you ever thought of your height in



FIG. 4

In case you are instinctively susceptible to balance, this test will tell you some of the secrets of club balance

exact terms of feet and inches? This is an important item in selecting a club. There are three different lies in clubs; flat, medium,

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and upright. All the clubs in your bag should be confined to just one of these lies. The flat



FIG. 5

One of these clubs is yours—but only one.
The three lies of wooden clubs; upright,
medium, and flat

is for people below five feet five inches: the medium, from there up to five feet ten inches; the upright, for still taller golfers (Fig. 5).

PICKING THE RIGHT CLUBS

You can classify the clubs' three degrees of whippiness in much the same way. These are stiff, medium, and springy. If you have



FIG. 6

A brassie and driver
that thoroughly agree
with each other. Same
length shaft, same
sized head

lived a rigorous outdoor life and are something of a hercules, the stiff club is the one for you. If you are only fairly strong, you had better stick to the medium. If something below fairly strong, use the springy.

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This same scale applies to the three weights in a club—heavy, medium, and light. The standard clubs are those of medium lie, length, and weight.

Finally, a word about the hitting surface of the club head. Be sure that this is fairly large. The importance of this is rather generally overlooked. When you drive a ball, how big a surface do you suppose the ball covers on the club head surface at the moment of impact?

“Oh, about as large as your small finger nail,” guessed the interviewer. Whereupon Dunn let drive a mashie shot and then held up as proof the dotted round stamp of the ball which had remained on the blade. It was larger than a twenty-five cent piece and just a trifle smaller than a half dollar.

That's what the concussion of the ball does. The head of your club should be large enough to take all that in, with something to spare. With half the ball on the head and half off you are not getting the distance to which you are entitled.

TALK II
LEARNING THE GOLF SCALE

TALK II

LEARNING THE GOLF SCALE

You may remember that when we were talking about selecting the right golf clubs I said it would be a good thing if a beginner could learn the game without any clubs at all. Sounds physically impossible, doesn't it? Well, as a matter of fact you can travel a long way toward the goal of successful golf without ever laying hands on a club.

This was a poser. Evidently Dunn was about to spring something brand new in golf. It sounded interesting.

For some unexplainable reason, most beginners at golf start in by cramming their heads full of technicalities that are all Greek to them. They foolishly think that this is the way to learn golf. And the harder they cram, the less progress they make.

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

The thing with which the beginner should really start is the golf scale. He should at first give all his thought to this, just as the aspiring singer confines his voice to the C D E F G of music. You can practise this golf scale without a club in your hand or moving from where you are standing. About the only necessary equipment is perseverance.

I see that you expect to hear of some great mystery. Nothing like it; just a few simple exercises that any one can practise when he jumps out of bed in the morning. Fifteen minutes a day of conscientious work will make you a very fair golfer before you have ever stepped upon a links.

Frankly, morning exercises failed to appeal, and the interviewer advised Dunn accordingly. Years before he had for a time diligently practised some sort of calisthenics. But there had come a morning when it had all seemed so confoundedly futile. Result—no more exercises.

You are quite right. An incentive is what is needed. Any kind of exercises aren't much value without one. But in the particular



FIG. 7

First position in the pivot exercise. This corresponds to the golf address

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

exercises I am going to tell you about, there is a perfectly bona fide incentive; and that is, good golf. Incidentally, and leaving golf out of it entirely, these exercises will do any one a world of good physically—but you can forget about that, if it worries you. Just remember, good golf; that is incentive enough for any one who wants to learn the game.

Now to get down to brass tacks. Stand with your legs spread apart—not too wide, just comfortably; remember you are not a contortionist. Have your toes in line and then lay a golf club on the floor in front of you, at right angles to this line. You are standing directly over the grip; the club head is away. If you haven't acquired a golf club yet, a walking stick or umbrella will answer the purpose as well (Fig. 7).

You are set for your exercise. First of all, stare the club head out of countenance and continue to do so through all that happens from then on. Place your hands on your hips and bend slightly forward. Keep the stomach well in, and without raising up from the bent



FIG. 8

Second position in the pivot exercise. The top
of the swing

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

position, pivot around to the right until the left hip and elbow are in line with the club (Fig. 8).

While doing this pivot movement, don't let the body carry your head around to the right with it. Keep your head facing forward and perfectly rigid. And keep your eyes glued on the club head. Also, as you swing around, the left knee should bend in a trifle to the right, and toward the end of the swing the right knee becomes almost rigid.

Now for the final movement in this exercise. From your wound-up position, swing the body completely around to the left so that you finish with the right hip and elbow on line with the club (Fig. 9). And you can speed this final swing up as fast as you wish. During its course the right knee bends in a little to the left while the left knee in turn becomes almost rigid. Remember at all times of the proceeding to keep the stomach in, eyes on the ball, body slightly bent, and head in the same rigid position.

The victim, somewhat puzzled, wanted to know



FIG. 9

Third position in the pivot exercise. Finish of the swing

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the precise reasons for all that had just happened. He couldn't recall anything of the kind in the little paper-covered morning exercise books of former years.

In bending over slightly and keeping the stomach in you bring into play the muscles used in the golf stroke. And likely enough they are muscles that haven't been exercised for a blue moon; no need for so many fat men in the world if these stomach muscles were exercised more. As for keeping your eye on the club head, this is the best possible training for keeping your eye on the ball.

Your first position in the exercise is the golf address; the second the top of the swing and the third the finish. The hand on the hip, bringing the elbow on line with the club on the floor, marks the distance one should pivot around in the golf swing.

Go through these clubless swings about ten times without letting up. Then gradually increase the count and before you know it you will be in prime shape for the game itself. Doesn't this sound like good sense?



FIG. 10

First movement in the balance exercise

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

The pupil agreed. After some minutes of the prescribed exercise it suddenly dawned upon him that the body played a greater part in the golf swing than he had ever before realized.

You can't rely upon your arms and hands to do all the work in golf. They are only a small part of the real propelling power. It's getting the body muscles into it that counts; the same solid muscles of the back, thighs, and shoulders that make the oarsman and boxer.

Speaking of boxing, here's another valuable exercise. We'll do a little shadow fighting. Take the same position as before, but hold your right arm out in front of you with the fist loosely clenched.

Pivot the body around to the right until the outstretched moving arm is behind. Then swing the arm around furiously to the first position—just as if you were in a real boxing match. Somewhere between the start of the forward swing and the first position, the fist instinctively doubles up and just the muscles you need to wipe up your man get into play. It's the same way when you hit a golf ball.



FIG. II

Second movement in the balance exercise

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The interviewing pupil had knocked out a whole row of imaginary adversaries before Dunn called a halt to take up the matter of balance in golf.

Now for a balance exercise. Assume the same bent position as before. Take a golf club or walking stick and hold one end between thumb and forefinger against your forehead. See that the lower end, which is the club head, hangs over a golf ball or some mark on the floor (Fig. 10). Pivot to the right (Fig. 11) and then around to the left (Fig. 12). And keep on going back and forth. Only be sure that the club doesn't move while you are doing it.

Although the interviewer tried faithfully enough, the club moved like a sapling in a high wind.

Not so easy as it looks, is it? But body balance is absolutely essential to good golf. Any sway in the club in that exercise is proof that your body is off balance. Do everything a good golfer does in a swing and it won't sway. In short, keep your head still, stomach in, body slightly bent, and eye on the ball.



FIG. 12

Third movement in the balance exercise

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The direction of the sway of the club in this exercise is a telltale of your particular fault. If it moves away and to the right, you may know that your stomach is out. In case you raise your body, the club will swing toward you.

Practise the three exercises I have mentioned. They'll keep you busy for some time. I'll give you more later on.

TALK III
THE GOLF GRIP



TALK III

THE GOLF GRIP

CERTAIN movements in the game of golf are fundamental. There is not any middle course about these—a thing is either right or it is wrong. There are other parts of the game however in which it doesn't make a great deal of difference how you go about it; provided of course that the underlying principle of the particular movement is sound. In other words, the game may be pretty well divided into essentials and non-essentials. Among the non-essentials is the golf grip. It is not absolutely necessary to use any one particular grip. You can take your pick of several and still play very fair golf.

“What is the best grip?”

I'd like to have you figure that out for your-

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

self. And remember this; while there may be several good ways, there is usually a better way. I'll first name a grip that is not even a good way. This is the cross-handle grip. With this, the left hand is below the right in grasping the club. There are other freak grips of this sort which you would do best not to bother your head about. They only complicate matters. All the accepted grips which are basically correct fall into two classes; these are the V or natural grip, and the overlapping grip. There are certain variations in the overlapping. You'll play good golf with either of these two classes of grips. But I'll presently give you my reasons for believing that one is the best. In the overlapping grip, more often known as the Vardon grip, the left thumb lies down the shaft of the club, while the little finger of the right hand rests upon the forefinger of the left hand. As the name implies, the two hands overlap. In the V grip, the two hands come together on the club handle but there is no overlapping (Figs. 13-14).

THE GOLF GRIP

"I've heard that the wrists work better in unison, in the overlapping grip."



FIG. 13

The V or natural grip. Just as if you were grasping a baseball bat

Why should we want unison when as everybody knows, the right hand does most of the work? A better plan would be to strengthen

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

up the left hand so that it would do its own share. I am free to say that I do not consider



FIG. 14

The overlapping or Vardon grip. Note little finger of right hand overlapping forefinger of left

the Vardon overlapping grip the best. That is especially true for people just starting out with golf. Of course with players like Vardon

THE GOLF GRIP

and Braid the muscles are thoroughly under control and everything runs as smooth as machinery. But with a new man it's different. The overlapping grip seriously complicates the back swing of the aspiring golfer. As an instructor, I see this constantly. I'm against anything that doesn't make the road as simple as possible.

"I like the overlapping grip," intruded the interviewer.

Mark you, I don't say that the Vardon overlapping grip is not a good grip. I only say there is a better one; that is the natural grip. If you have learned the Vardon grip and like it, there is no particular reason why you shouldn't continue with it, especially so if it has become a habit. I never ask a man to change his grip. I simply put the case up to him and he can suit himself. You say that in your particular instance you have used the Vardon grip but think a good deal about the position of your fingers when you grip a club. That's a pretty sure sign that the Vardon grip hasn't become a habit with you. Otherwise

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

you wouldn't give the fingers a thought. If it suits you to change your grip, I'd say you could do so without hurting your game.

Another thing, a man who plays with the overlapping grip right along, usually carries around with him a mean sore on the knuckle of his left forefinger. Some time ago I attended a tournament and just after the contenders finished driving off the final tee a newspaper man asked me to name the most significant thing I saw. I told him the thing that impressed me most was the fact that every man but one was wearing a piece of tape on the knuckle of his left forefinger—the unfailing sign of overlapping. It happened also that the winner of the tournament was using the natural grip.

“Vardon's a pretty fair golfer. And besides, a lot of other first string men use his grip,”
hazarded the pupil.

Just the point I want to make. Vardon would be a supremely fine golfer however he played. And just because he is a bit eccentric about his grip, people think it's the grip that's

THE GOLF GRIP

playing the game, when in reality it is Vardon. You may name to me a list of champions that use the Vardon grip but I will come right back at you with as equally a creditable list that use the natural grip. For example, Ball, Hilton, Evans, and Dauge. Hilton used the overlapping for a time but finally discarded it because he found that he could get better distance with the natural. As for Dauge, sufficient to say that this Frenchman is probably the longest driver in the world; what is more, the amateur championship of the United States has never been won with the overlapping grip.

Perhaps you think I am saying a good deal about this grip which I don't favour very strongly and not enough about one that I do. I am doing so with a distinct purpose. The Vardon grip has been copied and talked about so extensively that a lot of people think it's the only one in existence. It is not my intention to criticize it too severely. I merely want to make plain some facts that you do not usually hear about, so that you will know all sides of the case.

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

As to my reasons for favouring the natural grip, I like it first of all because it is natural. Every movement in golf should first, last, and all time be natural. When a beginner at golf starts with the natural grip, the game automatically becomes a continuation of something he has done before. Most men have played baseball or chopped down a tree. The fundamentals of the V grip are the same. When a man grasps a golf club in the same way he has handled a baseball bat or axe he immediately feels at home. That means he will make much faster progress than he would if he tried to master the intricacies of a grip entirely foreign to those former actions. You can't exactly visualize a woodsman using the overlapping grip to cut down a tree can you? Nor can I visualize a golfer who takes to the game naturally using anything other than the natural grip—or in other words, the woodsman's grip.

Let me repeat: if you have become used to the overlapping grip and like it, you can stick to it. But just for fun, try out the natural grip. It will feel a little awkward at first,

THE GOLF GRIP

after the overlapping grip which you have been using; but you'll probably soon get accustomed to it and then won't want to go



FIG. 15

Correct lie of club across fingers. Remember that club head is resting on ground

back to the overlapping. Grasp the club as if it were a baseball bat. That gives you the general principle of the V grip. But at the same time, you must remember that there is

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

this difference between baseball and golf: in one case you are hitting the ball waist high and in the other on the ground. The head of the golf club is resting on the ground and that means that you can't grip it straight across the



FIG. 16

The club should lie diagonally across fingers of left hand, not straight across

palms (Fig. 15). It's a mistake that a good many beginners make. The club should be lying diagonally across the fingers (Fig. 16). Furthermore, your hands should be relaxed.

You want to get as much power into your stroke as possible. You've no idea what a



FIG. 17

One reason why golf comes easy for tennis players.
The back-hand tennis stroke and back swing in
golf have much in common

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

difference the position of the left hand on the club makes. Just address the ball, please, and hold that position.

The interviewer followed instructions.



FIG. 18

Fingers of the left hand should be well hidden

You will notice that the fingers of your left hand are staring you in the face. Remember that the sweep of the left hand in the golf swing is like a back-hand tennis stroke (Fig. 17).

THE GOLF GRIP

This fact makes the position of your fingers an important item. You will not get the maximum power to your stroke by gripping the club as you are now doing. Just as an experiment, keep your left hand on the club and take the right entirely away. Now swing the club towards my shins as if you were going to lambaste me; or as if you were going through a back-hand stroke in tennis. That done, go through the same motion again—only before you do it the second time, move the position of your hand so that the fingers are hidden (Fig. 18). Do you notice any difference in sense of power between those two strokes?

Unquestionably there were much greater possibilities with the stroke in which the fingers were hidden.

Always remember that—fingers of left hand hidden. It will save you a lot of trouble and give you a powerful stroke. To sum up the position of the two hands on the grip: the left hand should loosely cover the shaft with the thumb coiled underneath and the fingers out of sight. The right hand now: the back of the



FIG. 19

Addressing the ball with the natural grip

THE GOLF GRIP

hand should be far enough under the shaft so that the fingers are half-way visible. The thumb should be coiled around the shaft as in the case of the left hand. The two hands should be close together (Fig. 19).

TALK IV
THE GOLF STANCE

TALK IV

THE GOLF STANCE

BEFORE we tackle some of the really vital things in golf, it is just as well to become familiar with those parts of the game that do not matter tremendously. Most beginners at golf are lacking in a sense of proportion; they fail to see the difference between the important and unimportant movements in the game and it often takes some time for them to develop this. They make much faster progress just as soon as they do and then devote their entire attention to the vital things.

The other day I spoke of the essentials and non-essentials of golf in relation to the golf grip. Although I recommended the natural grip, I said that there were several others from which a man could take his pick and still play

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

very fair golf. There's no arduous training required in learning a grip; you simply pick out the particular one you want and then dismiss it as an accomplished fact.

Now comes the stance—the position of your feet at the moment when you are ready to drive the ball. Volumes have been written about the stance. Different and devious are the ways which are recommended. The beginner is told to stand now one way, now another, if he expects to connect with the ball. If the truth of the matter be known, the stance is in the same class with the grip; it is a non-essential. You'll play good golf whatever the position of your feet, so long as your particular style isn't too extreme.

Strange words. The interviewer like most of his golfing kind had always looked upon the stance as a thing of vital importance.

Like the grip, the stance is a good deal the slave of fashion. A good player starts something different and the whole world follows suit. This sort of thing is rather hard on beginners for they usually copy the particular

THE GOLF STANCE

non-essential that happens to be in vogue at the time, under the impression that it is the only possible grip or stance allowed by the rules of the game. Follow the dictates of fashion for the stance covering a number of years and your right foot will slowly but surely describe an arc that doesn't fall so very short of being a semicircle. One year it's the square stance; that is, so that the line of the toes is parallel with the flight of the ball (Fig. 20). Again it may be the open stance; in this case, the right foot is advanced slightly before the left (Fig. 21). Another time it is the closed stance; the right foot is drawn back from the square stance line. You can play good golf in any of these three positions or their variations.

"Isn't there a best way?"

The square stance is in many respects the most natural way. I'll give you my reasons for saying this. To get away from golf for a moment, suppose that you were to make a pendulum out of a piece of string and a key. Then you were to hold the string in your right



FIG. 20

The square stance. The line of the toes is parallel with the flight of the ball

THE GOLF STANCE

hand and swing the key over a certain spot in the carpet. I think that if you were to examine the position of your feet you would find them parallel to the swing of the pendulum. Applying this example to golf, the spot in the carpet becomes the ball, and the key at the bottom of the string, the head of the golf club. The club head is to all intents a swinging pendulum.

In the case of the open versus the square stance, consider the baseball player. When the batter wishes to get an extra long ball he does not put his right foot forward. Then why should the golfer? In doing so there is a tendency to interfere with pivoting. Then too, one is liable to slice with the open stance. Slicing is a modern disease and dates from the introduction of this stance. The natural tendency when driving is to swing the club parallel to the feet. When you are standing at an angle other than a right angle to the line of flight a slice or pull often results.

The square stance is a position of parallel lines and right angles. This is just the way

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

we naturally see and do most things in life. We think continually in terms of right angles



FIG. 21

The open stance. In this case the right foot is advanced slightly before the left

and parallel lines. We row a boat, drive a motor car, or ride a horse at right angles. We live in right-angled houses and walk down parallel and right-angled streets. Just look

THE GOLF STANCE

at that picture hanging there on the wall. It is a series of right angles and here we are admiring it from a parallel line.

But I'm making no fast rule about this concerning the golf stance. In fact this is the very thing I'm trying to overcome. All people are not alike physically. A man may feel more at home using the open stance than the square. Then why on earth force something that is unnatural to him down his throat? Yet it is often done. When a beginner at golf comes to me I usually ask him to try out the square stance because it is generally the natural way. But if it feels unnatural to him, I let him change to whatever position suits him best. He himself is the only one who can solve that problem.

"Doesn't a man shift his stance more or less for different kinds of shots?"

Very often. Even when a man is a strong adherent to the square or any other stance he seldom lives up to it consistently in a round of golf. Here his right foot is square, again it is advanced. He isn't giving any thought to the

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

position of his feet; he is moving them to a certain position instinctively. That is just as it should be. Throw set rules regarding the stance to the winds and be natural.

TALK V
THE GOLF ADDRESS

TALK V

THE GOLF ADDRESS

How should a golfer look to you when he addresses the ball; at the moment when he is ready for the back swing? In simple terms, he should look as though he was about to connect squarely with the ball and send it on a straight line down the course. In case his expectations and your own come to naught, perhaps a single fault may be held accountable for the slip up. The fault may be in the swing. And then again it may be in the address: before he has got under way.

In our last talk I spoke of the position of the feet in the golf address. The three different kinds of stance were explained—open, square, and closed. While I said that personally I favoured the square stance in most cases, at the

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same time I advised the use of the one that felt most natural to the golfer. First, last, and all time he should think of the simple and natural in golf.

Right here, I would like to add that there are a lot of very simple things in golf that have been made needlessly difficult for the beginner. Certain golfing terms are among these. While the meaning of "square" in relation to the stance is self-evident, that of "open" and "closed" are quite confusing to the aspiring golfer. The names fail to explain anything. Sometimes I say to a pupil, "You are standing too open." Whereupon he proceeds to draw his feet together. What I mean to convey is that his right foot is advanced too far beyond his left. His feet have been the right distance apart; but it is quite natural that he should misunderstand me. These confusing terms of such general acceptance should be changed.

"How far apart should the feet be?"

Here again, the answer is: be natural. Remember your own height and comfort and act accordingly. No golf efficiency engineer



FIG. 22

Feet too close together. Result: topped ball

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

can tell you these things; although many will try. If you stand with the legs too close together, you will be unable to keep your balance in the swing and also probably top the ball. In case your legs are too wide apart, you'll probably find it too hard to pivot and also very likely will connect with the ground instead of the ball. It's up to yourself to find the happy medium somewhere between these extremes (Figs. 22-23).

The same way about distance to stand from the ball. Nobody can make any set rule about this. All people aren't built alike. Just leave enough leeway so that you can swing comfortably and no more, although I can tell you of a more or less mechanical way of gauging the distance to suit your own build.

"How do you go about it?"

Stand with your feet apart as in the stance and rest the shaft of the club on the right leg so that the sole of the club head is flatly on the ground. Make footprints where you are standing and then step forward and place a ball in front of the centre of the club head.



FIG. 23

Feet too wide apart. Result: hitting the ground

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

This represents the minimum distance from the ball and not the playing position. Now



FIG. 24

Gauging correct distance from ball. The minimum and not the playing position

step back to your original footprints. Grip the club, bend over the same as in previous address and extend the arms as far as you can.

THE GOLF ADDRESS

This gives the maximum distance and likewise not the position from which the ball



FIG. 25

Gauging correct distance from ball. The maximum distance but not to be played

should be played. However, place another ball in front of the club head just the same. Half-way between these two balls is the nat-

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

ural playing position from your footprints
(Figs. 24-25-26).



FIG. 26

Gauging correct distance from ball. Half-way
between minimum and maximum. The correct
playing position

“What should be the playing position of the ball?”

The point of impact between the ball and the club head should be on a line half-way

THE GOLF ADDRESS

between your feet. Of course this brings the ball itself a trifle left of centre. This may sound like splitting hairs, but just the same it is worth remembering; otherwise, the chances are that you will often place the ball well to the right of centre. In such cases there is a tendency to chop down upon the ball; you fail to get in a clean sweep away from you. As a result of this placing the ball too far to the right, it is very liable to roll along the ground.

“How about the position of the hands and club?”

Of course your right hand is below the left on the club shaft and this naturally brings the right shoulder down to accommodate it. This also throws the greater part of your weight upon the right leg. You are now addressing the ball. See that your hands are relaxed; barely more than holding the club. Most beginners make the mistake of not only squeezing the club for dear life, but also making all sorts of facial grimaces in the bargain. If you have this fault, just think of a person learning to drive a motor car. In his first

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ride, he grips the steering wheel with the same ferociousness that you do the golf club. But later on he eases up gradually and ends up by hardly touching the wheel when he steers.

Another common fault in the golf address is that of holding the club shaft over the left or right leg instead of directly in the centre. The club should be in line with the buttons of your coat. As you stand ready in the address, run your eye down the buttons of your vest, once and awhile, and see if the club is in line.

Finally, before starting the back swing, be sure that the toe of the club head is not tilting up in the air. See that the under side is resting evenly on the ground.

TALK VI
SOME GOLF FAULTS

TALK VI

SOME GOLF FAULTS

THE boy is a natural athlete. If you want to see an exhibition of golfing form that is practically flawless, ask a ten-year-old caddy boy to drive off. The chances are that he plays golf just as it should be played; naturally, without the slightest evidence of self-consciousness. Even though he drops the game for a few years he will never entirely forget how to play.

Grown men, taking up golf for the first time, are up against a harder proposition. Physically, they have got into all manner of bad ways since their boyhood days. Muscles have become set in unnatural directions. The golf instructor's job is to wipe out the years and make these grown men, boys again. If it

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happens that the beginner has gone in extensively for tennis or other sports, the task is often a comparatively simple one.

Natural aptitude for golf may come through having excelled at other ball games. As an example of this I might mention the case of an expert tennis player who came to me for golf instruction a short time ago. This man had never had a golf club in his hands before. Yet in only two or three lessons, his golf swing was nearly perfect. The tennis playing, of course, had kept his muscles and mental attitude toward a game just as they should be and gave him golf sense.

The man who has never gone in for other forms of sport has a distinctly harder row to hoe, when he takes up golf. But that is no reason why he shouldn't develop into as good a player as the other man, even though it does take him longer. If he keeps at it, he will arrive at golfing success.

"I know men who have tried to learn golf and given it up as impossible."

Anybody, I don't care who he is, can learn

SOME GOLF FAULTS

how to play golf. Of course, I don't mean that everybody can develop into an expert.



FIG. 27

Incorrect: rolling the forearms too soon

What I do say, however, is that anyone can become proficient enough so that he thor-

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oughly enjoys playing golf. It is not a game which is impossible for some people, as is sometimes said.



FIG. 28

Rolling the forearms correctly

Let the beginner who loses confidence and is about ready to give the game up, take this to heart. The name of this beginner's golfing faults may be legion; but that need not bother

SOME GOLF FAULTS

him. There is not a fault in the game of golf, which is not curable. His limit may be a half swing with a midiron, but even then that can



FIG. 29

It is a mistake to hold left arm doubled up and hands close to head as above

be quite well worth while. It is a clever man who knows his limitations.

"What are some of the most common faults of beginners?"

The list would be a long one. Just to name a few, I might mention: rolling the forearms too soon on the back swing (Fig. 27); hold-



FIG. 30

Left arm position shown above is too straight and rigid

SOME GOLF FAULTS

ing the left arm either doubled up (Fig. 29) or too rigid (Fig. 30) in the back swing; right elbow way up in the air at top of swing (Fig. 32); turning the left foot too soon; body off-balance (Fig. 32); raising up the body; head cocked over on left shoulder at top of swing instead of in dead centre. So it goes.

But I repeat, there is not one of these faults that cannot be cured. In some cases it takes longer than others. Much depends upon the interest and perseverance of the aspiring golfer; a great deal upon the instructor. A boy can learn by imitation, but a grown man analyzes things and has to know the reasons for making certain motions in specified ways. Just as soon as he understands the whys and wherefores of these motions, he goes ahead and performs them more naturally.

So it's a good deal up to the beginner to fire away with questions; the more the merrier. Besides this, it's a sign that he is genuinely interested, all of which puts the instructor upon his mettle, and he in turn becomes interested in making an especially superior golfer

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out of that particular pupil. Don't do anything without a good reason, because otherwise you will do it against your will.

"Don't the methods of some of the various golf instructors vary?"

Unfortunately, they do. In fact, I know of certain cases where beginners have been taught absolutely false golf. You've no idea how great a handicap this is to a beginner. The day usually comes when he changes instructors. But by that time, the damage will have been done; the wrong way has become a habit. He is a much harder case for the new instructor than though he had never had a club in his hand.

So you will see that it is highly important that a beginner start right. An acquired fault is the hardest kind of a one to get rid of.

"How is a beginner to know correct golfing form?"

I'll lead up to that gradually. First, let me say that golf is a game which has been played for more than three hundred years by people of the leisure class—people who haven't done



FIG. 31

Correct position of the left arm. It should be neither too straight nor too much bent

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much of anything else except play golf. All of which represents a good many generations of life-long study of the game. With such a solid background, it is reasonable to suppose that there are certain golfing motions in the game, as it is played to-day, about which you can say, "This is the correct way, any other way is wrong."

This rule of course does not apply to some few personal peculiarities in the game of some well known present day players. The grip, stance, and method of putting may differ slightly among leading players. Suit yourself pretty much how you go about them, remembering not to copy the eccentricity of an individual.

I've spoken before about the essentials and non-essentials in the game. A great many people get the two mixed up. There is a tendency to be up to date; on the lookout for the most recent stunt that some leading golfer has made popular. Perhaps it is a new way of gripping the club, such as the Vardon grip. In which case it is a non-essential. So, why



FIG. 32

Right arm is way up too far and body is off balance

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copy it? Rather make a study of the parts of that particular player's game which have the three hundred year background; in other words, the essentials.

I believe in copying the successful ones in golf, and in life for that matter. But I think it only common sense for one to confine this to the elements that have made them successful. If you go too far, you are liable to get muddled up and lose your sense of proportion.

I have here a collection of photos of some of the world's leading golfers in action. After you have studied these awhile you will find that there are not so many different kinds of golf form as you may have thought. In fact there is only one kind; and you will see it in every one of those pictures. The essentials of the swing are the same in every case. It is only in the non-essentials that they differ.

Study those photos carefully. Note the exact position of Vardon's heel in relation to his back swing. See whether his arm is rigidly stiff, only partially so, or doubled up.

SOME GOLF FAULTS

Clearly, it is only partly stiff. Then the next time some one tells you to play with a perfectly rigid arm, flash Vardon's photo on him.

TALK VII
GETTING THE KNACK OF THE SWING

TALK VII

GETTING THE KNACK OF THE SWING

ABOUT every beginner at golf who is ambitious to become a good player has two roads open to him. One is to begin at the top and the other is to begin at the bottom. In the first case he will probably work down and in the other he will unquestionably work up. By the top, I refer to the full swing. After a man has mastered that thoroughly so that the right swing has become second nature to him, he is a finished golfer.

Most beginners want to tackle the full swing right at the start. They usually think that the driver is the only really important club in a golf bag. Often when a new pupil comes to me, the first club he picks out is a driver and I fairly have to hide it to keep it away from him.

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The full swing is the hardest movement in the game, and a driver or brassie the most difficult of clubs—although not a very promising combination for a beginner. Why start with the most difficult in golf? The wiser method is to follow the lines of least resistance. Start with the simple part of the game, perfect that, and the difficulties will pretty well take care of themselves.

“Why do beginners feel so confident about tackling the full swing?”

They fail to appreciate the foundation upon which it is built. Many people look upon the full swing as a movement quite different from the quarter, half, and three-quarter swings. To them, each one of these is a unit unto itself. They believe that there is no special connection between these four shots.

As a matter of fact they are all one continuous movement which reaches its climax in the full swing. For this reason, you will see the importance of perfecting the short strokes before lengthening out into the full ones. A slight fault in the half swing becomes an



FIG. 33

The club as a pendulum. One of the first principles of how a golf ball is swept off the tee

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exaggerated and very serious fault by the time you have reached the full swing. The only safe way is to perfect your half swing to the point where that fault will not develop at all.

The beginner who attempts to master the full swing in a minute, hasn't the slightest idea what he is trying to do. On the other hand, the man who starts from small beginnings, and masters each step as he comes to it, has a chance to analyze things and sees the reasons for every movement.

For example, if he is painstaking enough simply to grasp the end of the club grip between the thumb and forefinger and let the club swing back and forth in front of him like a pendulum, he will learn and remember one of the first principles of how a golf ball is swept off the tee. Then he can go ahead and apply it (Fig. 33).

"What club and stroke do you recommend for beginners."

The midiron and a quarter swing with only the left arm is a good starter. Also, leave the

GETTING THE KNACK OF THE SWING

ball out of it entirely. Get the knack of the swing first. Some time ago in one of our talks I spoke of the pivoting and balancing exercises, by means of which a man could learn a lot about golf without any club in his hands. I will now take up two exercises in which the club, but no ball is used.

First comes this left arm quarter swing. With the exception of right hand being on hip or at your side, take the proper golf stance, with eye on the imaginary ball, fingers of left hand well hidden on grip, and then swing the club back and forth in a short pendulum like swing, at the same time pivoting to right and left as far as is natural. Keep this exercise up continuously for some time, always just shaving the surface of the ground with the bottom of the club head (Fig. 34).

This exercise gives you the feel of both the club and the short swing. Also it is the best possible means for strengthening the muscles of the left arm. For this reason it is a valuable exercise for advanced golfers as well as beginners to practice now and then. With

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most people, the right arm is stronger than the left; it is perfectly reasonable to suppose that if both arms were of the same strength they



FIG. 34

Getting the knack of the swing without hitting the ball

would work in better unison. If you keep at this exercise for some time, the left arm will soon be in condition to do its full share of the work.

GETTING THE KNACK OF THE SWING

In the next exercise you go through the same movement I have just mentioned, but instead of only one hand, both hands in this case are grasping the club and in regulation golfing style. Swing back and forth, back and forth, always shaving the ground at the centre of the arc. When you fail to connect with the ground, it probably means that you have raised up; if you dig up the ground, you are bending over too far. I mention these as only two of several golf faults that you can correct before you have ever hit a ball. There are many others.

If there is any one exercise a man can practice that will make a finished golfer out of him, this is the one. For here you are playing the game in all its essentials; only the ball is lacking. The full swing is merely a continuation of the short movement you are going through. I call this exercise, "shaving the mat"; in giving lessons I place a door mat in front of a pupil. Anybody can use the same scheme in his own home. Even advanced golfers would do well to come back to this

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

simple exercise whenever they find themselves getting off their game (Fig. 35).



FIG. 35

Making the correct way a habit: the "shaving the mat" exercise

It isn't always easy for beginners to connect with the surface of the mat. In most cases they swing through thin air or dig into the

GETTING THE KNACK OF THE SWING

mat, at first. Then they begin to take stock of their faults with the result that they become more accurate. After the right way has become a habit, one can take his eyes off the mat and look out of the window if he wishes, while going through this exercise; and on every back and forward stroke, the club head shaves the mat as neatly as can be.

"Why not let a beginner start out hitting balls with this short stroke?"

Even in this short stroke, when a man starts right in hitting the ball he is liable to develop unnecessary faults. The average beginner will chop at the ball rather than sweep it away from him. The "shaving the mat" exercise is the sweeping movement of the finished golfer. Needless to say it's better to make this correct movement of golf a habit, rather than the fault of chopping. If the pupil never finds out that such a fault as chopping exists, so much the better for him.

A beginner can't give too much time to this exercise; the more attention he gives it, the better his game will eventually become. After

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he has become fairly accurate at this, he can proceed to the practice of actually hitting balls with the quarter and half swing. But he should always take full stock of his faults as they appear and not allow them to get any further. By slow degrees he can continue back to the three-quarter and then the full swing.

TALK VIII
STICK TO THE MINOR SHOTS

TALK VIII

STICK TO THE MINOR SHOTS

THERE are two old adages that every beginner at golf should have constantly in the back of his head. One is, "practice makes perfect," the other, "make haste slowly." The beginner should confine his efforts to the quarter and half swings; practise them over and over until they are letter perfect; until the right way has become second nature to him. Then he can proceed to master the three-quarter and finally the full swing.

But let him always remember this: the longer he sticks to the quarter and half shots, the better will his game eventually become. Make your short game perfect and the long game will take care of itself.

In this connection, I will ask you to follow

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the play of the leading golf professionals. Practically every one of these men excels in the minor shots; and incidentally the man who plays a consistent game of well placed minor shots, usually plays a winning game. The reason why the average golf professional plays the short game so exceedingly well dates back to his golf beginnings; for days, months, and sometimes years his game had been almost entirely confined to the quarter and half swings.

In most cases these men were started upon their golfing careers as caddy boys. Fortunately for them, very few owned a whole bagful of clubs in their earliest golfing days; the fact that their club possessions were confined to an odd iron or mashie was really the thing that made their game. Then, too, while waiting around for their employers to come to the tee, they usually killed time by practising short mashie shots. With a solid foundation of this sort, it is not at all surprising that in due time, these boys should have developed into experts at the minor shots.



FIG. 36

In this case the toe of the club is turned too much and the right elbow is raised up too far

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

"Why is it so difficult for the average beginner to hit a ball squarely?"

It's a state of mind for the most part. People have the erroneous idea that there is a great mystery about golf. In reality there isn't any mystery about it at all. It is simply a question of hitting the ball naturally. But instead, many people become panic stricken at the supposed difficulties of connecting with the ball, and wind themselves up into all sorts of unnatural contortions (for example, figures 36-37). To the caddy boy, killing time with a few short mashie shots, there is no mystery to golf; none of the supposed difficulties occur to him. He simply plays perfect and natural golf.

The mere presence of the ball is often sufficient to frighten the beginner into all sorts of unnatural movements. For this reason it is wise for him first to acquire the knack of the minor swings without a ball at all. When this knack becomes second nature to him, the ball is no longer a bugaboo, but simply a small white object that happens to be



FIG. 37

Two common faults are shown here. Left arm is doubled up and head of the club is not turned enough

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

in the line of the swing. In our last talk, these shots with a wholly imaginary ball were explained. The most valuable one is called "shaving the mat"; that is, take a short swing back and forth over an ordinary door mat, just grazing the surface with the club head.

After the beginner has become accustomed to the feel of the club, and finds that he is able to connect with the surface of the mat fairly consistently, he is ready for the next step. Now he can try hitting the ball, with the same short stroke.

A golf course is not the best place in the world for the beginner to practise the actual hitting of the ball; in fact it's one of the worst. By far the best method is to go to an indoor golf school (Figs. 38-39) or rig up some sort of court yourself with a canvas back stop; there may be room for it in your attic or back yard. One of my pupils uses as a combination back stop and bull's-eye, an old carpet swung across the entrance to his garage. Every day when he gets home from business he bombards it with several dozen shots.



FIG. 38

Driving off in an indoor golf school. A door mat serves as an excellent tee



FIG. 39
The putting green of an indoor golf school

STICK TO THE MINOR SHOTS

I have at Lake Placid, an outdoor netted court adjoining the golf course. Pupils sometimes start out with the belief that they will

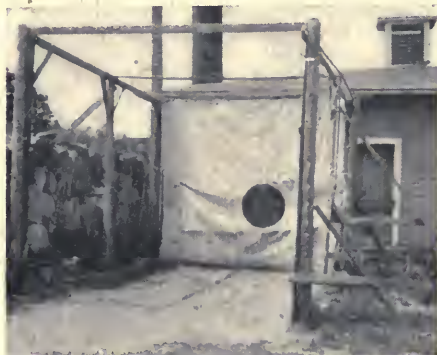


FIG. 40

Where a beginner will learn golf more quickly than on the links. A practice cage of cheap and simple construction

make faster progress by learning on the course itself. But they usually fall back upon the court as the surer method.

This particular court cost less than twenty-five dollars to build. There isn't much to it but posts and crosspieces with chicken house wire strung over the top, sides, and one end. Just in front of the closed end is a sheet of



FIG. 41

Wrong. When only a half a swing is wanted, there is a common tendency to swing back too far

STICK TO THE MINOR SHOTS

canvas and a bull's-eye to aim at. Nearly any one can build one like it in the back yard (Fig. 40).

Practice, above all else is what will make a golfer out of a man. With some such equipment as this, either indoors or outdoors, at his disposal he can practise to his heart's content.

"How should a man go about using such a court?"

Simply take a dozen or more golf balls and drive them at the canvas target one after the other, using the short stroke already mentioned. Be sure to stick to the short stroke; one of the common faults with a beginner who intends to take only a half swing is that he reaches back to one that more closely approaches a three-quarter (Fig. 41). The first thing a man should do is to make up his mind that he is going to make a record of six successive strikes on the target. The chances are, however, that he won't do this. Probably he will manage to get up to four or five, and then spoil the string with a fizzle. In this case he should pay a penalty; one that is an excellent



FIG. 42

Correct: How a half swing should look at the top

STICK TO THE MINOR SHOTS

lesson in concentration. He should start all over again beginning at "one."

When he has finally registered six successive hits, he is allowed to go after bigger game. Let him try next for twelve successive hits. If he falls down at "eleven," back he goes to "one" again and so on over and over until the coveted twelve has been reached. Where there are proper facilities for doing so, this same method can be carried out with twenty-four and then fifty shots. When you get up around forty-eight or so, it's a good test of concentration to run out the string successfully.

Of course it's not likely that a man will have as many golf balls as this to play, but he can devise some scheme whereby each ball rolls back to his feet after hitting the target. In giving indoor instruction, I have had an inclined floor constructed, reaching from the base of the target to the pupil's feet. In this way, all he has to do is reach down and pick up each ball after it has rolled back.

TALK IX
FROM THREE-QUARTERS TO FULL SWING

TALK IX

FROM THREE-QUARTERS TO FULL SWING

I HAVE spoken of the importance to the golf beginner of perfecting the minor shots before attempting the full swing. This advice can't be repeated too often. First get the quarter swing down pat, then in turn the half, and follow that up with the three-quarter swing so that the right way becomes a habit; then the full swing in most cases will take care of itself. Some people think that the full swing is an entirely different movement from the quarter, half, and three-quarter shots. As a matter of fact, it is exactly the same—merely a continuation of the minor swings.

I have mentioned the necessity of practising the half swing until it has become perfect; until every move you make is correct without

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

your giving a thought to what you are doing. When that happy moment has arrived, you can swing back to the three-quarter and perfect that in the same way (Figs. 43-44).

It happens that the three-quarter swing is the limit of some people's game. Their three-quarter and the shorter shots are often without a flaw, but when it comes to reaching back to the full swing they may not be able to quite get it. In such a case it is foolish for a man to spend a good part of a lifetime trying to acquire something that is beyond him. Life is too short.

It is far wiser to play fairly good golf with a three-quarter swing than poor golf with a full swing. The man who has perfected the three-quarter but can't quite master the full swing is up against this very situation. In most cases, this applies to men who have not taken up golf until they are over forty and who are without an athletic background.

Although the full swing is but a continuation of the three-quarter, I am going to take



FIG. 43
Top of the three-quarter swing



FIG. 44

Finish of the three-quarter swing

FROM THREE-QUARTERS TO FULL SWING

you to it by what may strike you as being a rather round-about method. However, it is an extremely effective one. This first step in getting the knack of the full swing is in the form of a simple practice exercise, somewhat along the lines of other exercises I have mentioned in our talks. I do not say that this particular exercise is necessary in order to acquire the full swing. But it simplifies matters, and golf at every stage should be kept down to the simplest possible terms.

The first move in this exercise is to address the ball as you would for a quarter, half, or three-quarter swing. But instead of swinging the club back in the customary manner, bring it straight up to and over the right shoulder (Fig. 45). You will now imagine, if you can, that the club is a long handled mallet and that you wish to drive a peg into the ground with it. In the position you are now holding, the head of the club is hanging down over the shoulder; your hands on the grip of the club are in line with your chin. The position of the body remains just as in the address; body



FIG. 45

Second position in the mallet exercise. Imagine you are about to drive a peg into the ground

FROM THREE-QUARTERS TO FULL SWING

slightly bent, right shoulder depressed a little, left arm almost straight, right elbow down,



FIG. 46

An instantaneous snapshot showing correct position at top of the swing

head facing forward and feet firmly planted on the ground.

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

You are now in a position to drive the peg into the ground with an up and down swing of



FIG. 47

The correct finish of a full iron shot

the arms. But if you wish to get any man-sized strokes out of the mallet, it is quite

FROM THREE-QUARTERS TO FULL SWING

necessary that you get your body into the strokes. The entirely natural movement to do this would be to swing the arms to the right and at the same time pivot. This movement brings the shaft of the club (or mallet) across the back of your neck, although not quite touching it.

If you will now proceed to examine the pivot you have made with such entire naturalness, you will find that the left heel is off the ground, the left knee bent inward, right leg almost rigid, left arm almost straight, right elbow down, and your eyes are fixed upon the imaginary peg. And you may be surprised to learn that you are in almost perfect form for the top of the full golf swing (Fig. 46).

TALK X
THE IMPORTANCE OF BALANCE

TALK X

THE IMPORTANCE OF BALANCE

ONCE you have mastered the full swing you can conscientiously say that you know golf. The full swing is the sum total of the game. You will have your off days—that concerns mental condition mainly—but the feel of the full swing once acquired is never forgotten.

We can compare golf with other sports in this respect. Suppose that some time in the past you have learned the fine points of swimming or skating but have not engaged in these sports recently. Then you suddenly take them up again. At first you are a trifle rusty, but it is not long before you are back into your old form again.

It is the same way with golf. The full swing, once you have it right, will always stay



FIG. 48

Wrong. Head has moved off centre and thrown
whole body out of balance

THE IMPORTANCE OF BALANCE

by you. Even though you drop the game entirely for a time, you will never have to begin all over when you start in again. All that is needed is a little brushing up.

In order to acquire this permanent foundation, it is quite essential that you get the full swing right in the first place. The road to perfection is often a long hard one. Yet when once the goal is reached the correct full swing will strike you as being astonishingly simple, much more simple in fact than the wrong way. And your form at the full swing depends mainly upon what it happens to be at the quarter, half, and three-quarter swings.

If your minor shots are right, the chances are that your full swing will be perfect. The top of the full swing is simply a continuation of these. If the segments of the circle are without faults, so will the complete circle be above reproach. That is why I constantly repeat the necessity of perfecting the minor shots before tackling the full swing.

Of utmost importance is balance—absolute body balance every inch of the way from the



FIG. 49

Correct. Head is dead centre as at address and in
perfect balance



FIG. 50

Turning the heel too far at top of swing. This
throws one off balance

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

address to the top of the swing. If this is correct at the top, the club will sweep down and hit the ball square. But if you go off balance at any stage while the club is travelling to the top—at quarter, half, or three-quarter—the chances are that you will be off balance at the top and also to a greater extent than you are farther down. A fault that is comparatively slight at the quarter or half stage becomes greatly exaggerated by the time it reaches the full.

Let us go through the movement of the full swing from the address to the top. At the address, we will take for granted that your balance is perfect. Right shoulder is down, stomach is in, head is held rigidly in the centre, eyes are on the ball, hands are gripping club without any effort. All is natural and easy.

You now proceed to make a half turn to the right, keeping the forward bend of the body constant. Due to the pivoting, the left knee bends inward, the wrists twist naturally. By the time you reach the top, the right elbow



FIG. 51

The correct distance to turn heel at top of swing

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

is fairly well against the body the hands are well away from the head, the left arm is almost although not quite straight.

There are quite a few possible faults that may crop up during this proceeding that will throw the body off balance and spoil the whole shot. All may go well until the half swing stage is reached and then perhaps the body sways off balance to the left. This is known as "waisting," a very common fault.

I wish to emphasize particularly the necessity of keeping the head still throughout the swing. It should remain in the same identical position as in the address. A common tendency is that of inclining it to the left. You may hardly consider this enough to throw the whole body off balance. But it will. A man can sometimes allow his eyes to wander from the ball and still hit it. But very seldom can he connect with it if his head is not held rigid all the time from the address until the time of impact (Figs. 48-49).

This is one of the basic things about golf that people do not hear enough about. "Keep

THE IMPORTANCE OF BALANCE

your eye on the ball” has a familiar ring to every golfer’s ears. And, of course, it is very important. Some time ago a prominent golfer was blindfolded after being allowed to see the position of the ball. Thereupon he proceeded to drive a superb shot. He couldn’t keep his eye on the ball, but he had to keep his head still. If you wish to play good golf, remember these four words: “Keep your head still.”

TALK XI
TAKE CARE OF YOUR HANDS

TALK XI

TAKE CARE OF YOUR HANDS

THE man who expects to play a good round of golf must first of all be in prime condition. This applies either to his physical or mental make-up, usually a combination of the two. A heavy lunch immediately before a round, for example, is not conducive to the best play. Your wits must be keenly alive every minute in golf and if you feel the least bit loggy it is difficult to keep them so.

Even though you have a good fund of energy, it is a mistake to use a lot of it in getting to the links. Now and then a pupil who has an appointment with me for a golf lesson finds that he is a minute or two late and rushes in all out of breath. As a matter of fact I would prefer that he did not come at all than in that

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

condition. He will be in no shape to get the most out of the lesson until he has rested for a time and become normal again.

In the same way, it is a mistake to rush through a round of golf, as though you were catching the last train home. Many a man at the end of such a round looks as though he had been through a football game. It is safe to say that his game has suffered more than he has. Golf is a game in which there is no intention of roughness either on your opponent or yourself. If you treat yourself the least bit roughly, your game will suffer in consequence.

This brings us to the care of the hands. Few people realize how important it is that the hands be without a scratch or blemish. Even a ring worn on your finger is detrimental to good golf. But it is the common garden variety of blister that is probably the most usual offender so far as the hands are concerned.

You may consider a blister or a scratch of small importance. In a football game, of course, it wouldn't make any difference with

TAKE CARE OF YOUR HANDS

your game. But you must remember that golf is an entirely different sort of sport. Here is a game so keenly mental that even the rustling of a piece of paper may turn a prospective long drive into a disappointing fizzle. What then of the worrisome blister on the driving hand? Simply that it is practically out of the question for one thoroughly to concentrate as long as it is there. And without thorough concentration one can never hope to play good golf.

Some golfers seem to be a bit proud of a row of blisters. They are nothing to be proud of. In fact, they serve only as one of the best known means of keeping the score high. These golfers may not realize it, but they can hold those blisters directly responsible for having lost them a good many holes. Probably nine golfers out of ten fail to appreciate fully just how highly keyed a game it is they are playing.

Even a single small blister is one of the greatest of handicaps to a man's game. It doesn't actually have to give you pain to throw

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your game off. The subconscious thought that it is there is often enough. Such a small thing in some cases can be more disastrous to one's game than even a bad case of indigestion.

There is no reason in the world why a golfer should have blisters. If he realized how much they harmed his game he wouldn't grow them in the first place. This simply represents taking some means of prevention. In other words, wear gloves. At any rate, wear them until your hands have become so hardened that they can fairly well take care of themselves. Even though a man doesn't keep them on all season he should in all cases wear them in the early part when the hands are soft.

This applies equally to the man just taking up golf, whenever he starts. You may think that the hands will fail to become hardened when wearing gloves. As a matter of fact they will become hardened just about as fast with gloves as without them. The only difference is that in one case they will come out with blisters and in the other without. Some men don't like to wear gloves playing



FIG. 52

It is wholly natural golf when all muscles of the body from toes to eyes move together in one direction

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golf because they think gloves seem effeminate. Of course such talk as this is all poppycock.

The manner in which one grips the club often has much to do with the development of blisters. You will more frequently find blisters on the hands of beginners than in the case of men who have played golf a good deal. The reason for this lies in the fact that the beginner, instead of relaxing properly, usually grips the club as though it were the proverbial straw of the drowning man.

The thickness of the club shaft also has something to do with this. A grip of narrow diameter is often more likely to give one blisters than one of larger diameter. In the case where the thickness is not so great one instinctively grips harder to get a purchase upon the club (Fig. 53).

So much for blisters. Now for trouble that may come from holding the left hand too high up the shaft. If you will turn your left hand upward and feel along the side of the palm in line with the left hand's small forefinger you may or may not find a little soreness there.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR HANDS

If you fail to find any tender spot in the palm this means that you are probably in the habit of gripping the club with your left hand at about the right position on the shaft. This proper position is just below the top string binding on the leather (Fig. 16).

However, if there is a soreness in the palm it means that when you grip the club, you allow your left hand to wander up above the top of the shaft. Any one who does this is letting himself in for a lot of trouble. It happens that there is a very delicate bone in the outer edge of the palm. If the top of the shaft comes into contact with this, the bone becomes very much irritated, and you are likely to have a bad siege of it. I've known men who have been out of the game entirely for six months at a time just because of this. So be sure to keep your hand below the top string binding.

I do not favor the overlapping grip. I prefer the natural grip. One reason for this is that the overlapping is likely to knock a man's hands out of kilter. In the overlapping grip, the small finger of the right hand comes into



FIG. 53

The grip of this club shaft is of generous diameter. One is not tempted to grip hard in order to get a purchase

TAKE CARE OF YOUR HANDS

contact with the forefinger of the left. As a result, friction is set up and very often you find a mean sore on the knuckle of this left forefinger. A sore of this sort is disconcerting to one's game. If you attend a tournament you will probably be able to recognize the men who use the overlapping grip by rings of tape around their forefingers.

Speaking of tape, if you have reason to use it, you might as well use it right. Many people wind a piece of tape around a sore finger just as though they were tying up a bundle. If you wish the sore to heal—and you wouldn't bother with tape at all if you didn't—treat it decently. Never should one allow the sticky side of the tape to come into contact with the sore. Wind first with the smooth side next to the sore. After that you can reverse it and wind with the sticky part underneath.

TALK XII
TOPPING THE BALL

TALK XII

TOPPING THE BALL

THE faults that one cannot fathom are the ones that cause all the trouble in golf. There is a direct reason for every fault, and the longer one goes on in blitheful ignorance of what this may be, the more difficult does good golf become. For in due time the fault becomes a fixed habit and nothing is harder to overcome than habit. However, once you have analyzed matters and understand the exact reason for a fault you can proceed to mend your golfing ways. From then on you are on the lookout for that particular fault and when it crops up you readily recognize it. In time you overcome it.

One of the most common faults in golf is the ancient evil of topping the ball. Of course

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

if a man's swing is perfect in every respect he won't top. But the fact remains that the result is often disappointing even when on the surface the golfer seems to be in perfect form. In such cases, he probably cannot figure out for the life of him the reason for it all. Likely enough this is because the root of the evil is so astonishingly self-evident.

As an example of this we will take the matter of keeping the eye on the ball. Perhaps the golfer who has just topped, on being questioned swears that he has kept his eye glued upon the ball. So far so good. But possibly when we begin to inquire about the particular part of the ball he has eyed, the answer brings forth the cause of the trouble. Likely enough it has been the top of the ball.

Right here is where it pays to stop and reason things out. Reason just why the top of the ball is the wrong place to keep the eye and the side is the right place. A surprisingly large number of golf beginners go wrong on this. I ask a great many of my new pupils about the part of the ball upon which they



FIG. 54

An old cure for looking up too soon; keeping eyes fixed on spot from which ball has flown. Although unnatural, there is no harm in trying it now and then but don't allow it to become a habit

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keep their eyes and in many cases they admit the top. Yet this is obviously quite the unnatural thing to do. Let us reason this out.

Say a man is driving a stake into the ground with a sledge while another man has his hand around the stake just below the top in order to steady it. If it happens that the man wielding the sledge is unaccustomed to this work it is quite likely that his thoughts are centred upon the other fellow's hand. He is afraid he will hit it.

The one and only spot where his thoughts and eyes should be centred are on the exact top of the stake. But just as soon as his thoughts wander to the other man's hand, his eyes follow suit. So does the sledge. I will leave the rest to your imagination. And doubtless you will see how this principle may apply just as aptly in keeping the eye on the exact spot where you wish to hit the golf ball as it does in the case of the sledge.

Another misconception among beginners that leads to topping and poor golf is the matter of contact between ball and club head.



FIG. 55

A cure for topping. Crumple up a piece of paper and lay it behind the ball. Drive the paper. You will hit the ball fair and square

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Very often I ask a new pupil to point out on the club head the spot of contact with the ball. The chances are that he puts his finger on the lower edge of the club head. Of course



FIG. 56

Sometime, examine the dotted round stamp made by the concussion of the ball. It is nearly as large as a half-dollar piece. See that your club head is large enough to accommodate it

if that is the spot where he has his mind set upon hitting the ball, that is exactly where he will hit it. And the natural result will be either a topped ball or a very short one.

As I have said in a previous talk, the point

TOPPING THE BALL

of contact should be directly in the centre of the face of the head. When I explain how the



FIG. 57

The wrong way to finish the swing. Shoulders should be on same plane from address to finish

concussion of the ball acts you will see the reason for this. Some day after you have made a particularly good shot, examine the

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

face of the club head carefully. Then you will realize just what the concussion of the ball means.

The markings of the ball still remain on the



FIG. 58

The address of a mashie shot. Note height of shoulder above, and in the photo which follows

face. These are in the form of a dotted round stamp almost as large as a half-dollar piece. If only a half circle is stamped on the face, this means an imperfect shot. With half the ball on the head and half off you are getting only

TOPPING THE BALL

about half the distance to which you are entitled (Fig. 56).

The greatest amount of topping is due to raising the body up during the course of the



FIG. 59

Finish of a mashie shot. Shoulder is same height
as at address

swing. The shoulders should be on exactly the same plane from the address to the finish of the swing. But it often takes a good deal of practice before a man can accomplish this. Raising the body is one of the most difficult

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things in golf to overcome. Offhand you might say that it would be one of the easiest. You must remember, however, that here you have a habit of years to overcome. A man raises up instinctively. That is the way he stands and walks; even though he be in any leaning position he bounds right back to straight again (Figs. 57-58-59).

In the golf address he is forced to lean over to connect with the ball. Just as soon as the club swings back into thin air he often unconsciously straightens his body. The result on the down swing is a topped ball.

On the other hand, he may go from straight to the other extreme. He makes an effort to lean over and as a result the club digs up the ground before reaching the ball. It is important that one keep the body slightly bent all the way through the golf swing, right from address to finish.

TALK XIII
OVERCOMING FAULTS

TALK XIII

OVERCOMING FAULTS

AMONG many fond memories of my boyhood days on the St. Andrews links in Scotland was a certain old General. The General was an enthusiastic golfer, but at the same time he suffered rather more than his allotted share of golfing faults. The General decided that he would overcome these in short order and he proceeded to work out a plan all his own for doing so.

He got four celluloid tags. Then he attached two of these to the uppers of his shoes. The other two were fastened on the arms of his coat just above the wrists. On one of the foot tags was printed "Keep your eye on the ball," on the other "Don't press." The respective arms' tags read, "Follow through" and "Slow back."

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Placarded with these constant reminders, the General started forth on his round of golf.



FIG. 60

A cure for raising up. If the back swing is correct, the space between head and horizontal club will remain as shown in address

I am uncertain as to whether this original scheme helped his game; it seems to me it must have proved a bit disconcerting. How-



FIG. 61

See preceding photo. The above is what often happens. The golfer has raised up and knows it when head meets club

INTIMATE GOLF TALKS

ever that may be, the General had the right idea. There are a number of little schemes, possibly more or less mechanical, that will notably help a man's game.

I have spoken recently about the very common fault of topping the ball. A man's shoulder should be on the same plane, his head centred in the same position at the top of the swing as they have been at the address. If they are not, he will probably top the ball on the down swing. A very usual fault is that of raising the body and allowing the head to drop toward the left shoulder as one approaches the top of the swing (Fig. 48).

The golfer is seldom conscious of the fact that he raises his body, but it is easy enough to show him proof of it. If you are inclined this way, get a friend to stand at your left side and hold a golf club horizontally a few inches above your head at the address. Then go through a practice swing (Fig. 60).

Before going far you will probably have a sensation that some one has banged you on the top of the head. This is your friend's club of



FIG. 62

The body should pivot on a dead centre throughout the entire swing. Club held vertically in photo represents centre line at address. The golfer has swayed to the right and is off balance



FIG. 63

In this case the golfer has pivoted on a dead centre as noted by position of club to the rear

OVERCOMING FAULTS

course. It has remained motionless; it is you who have risen to meet it (Fig. 61). After a little practice you will find that you are reaching the top of the swing without encountering the club.

Another scheme of the same sort, one whereby you can practice by yourself, is that of using a bell. Tie a string to a bell and hang it from the limb of a convenient tree so that it dangles within a few inches of the top of your head at the address. On raising up, you ring the bell.

Practising before a mirror is a great help. There's nothing like seeing yourself as others see you. With a mirror before you it is possible to stop at any stage of the swing and look yourself carefully over to see if everything is as it should be. At the top of the swing especially, it is wise to stop dead and notice whether you are properly balanced. Note carefully the position of the head and body at the address, and then see whether the position at the top of the swing corresponds with it properly.

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I always use a mirror in my instruction work. It is much more effective actually to show a man a living likeness of himself off centre and off balance than merely tell him about it. With the pupil facing the mirror at the address I often stand behind him and hold a golf club in front of me in a vertical position. This position represents the line of centre balance (Fig. 62).

At the address, most of the club cannot be seen in the mirror. By the time the top of the swing has been reached, however, it may be in full view. The rigid club still remains in the proper position for the centre of balance, but the actual balance of the pupil has gone strangely askew. After due practice, however, the pupil's head, body, and my golf club become one (Fig. 63).

Another good idea is to have somebody take a few snap-shots of you during various stages of your play. After the films have been developed you will probably find that you play a whole lot differently from what you thought you did. Compare the photos of



FIG. 64

If heeling the ball is your fault, try addressing it
with the toe of the club



FIG. 65

Turning the club head is a common way to spoil a mashie shot. Club shown at the right has a turned face; that to the left is correct

OVERCOMING FAULTS

yourself with those of a prominent golfer like Vardon and note well just where the difference lies.

Many faults can be cured by exaggeration. By going to the opposite extreme one often actually strikes a happy mean. For example, if one is slicing badly he may very well find that by making an effort to pull the ball he overcomes the slicing and instead of pulling really drives the ball straight down the course.

In much the same way if one finds himself continually hitting the ball with the heel of the club, it is wise to go to the other extreme and address it with the toe (Fig. 64).

Or take the matter of topping. Roll up a small piece of paper and lay it on the ground directly behind the ball. Then instead of playing the ball, play that piece of paper. You will probably hit the ball fair and square (Fig. 55).

TALK XIV
KEEPING THE MUSCLES IN HARMONY

TALK XIV

KEEPING THE MUSCLES IN HARMONY

THERE is a notable difference between wise effort on the one hand and violent energy on the other. The first represents head work, the second usually lack thereof. This is essentially true of golf. In golf we find a game of effort, and whether this means wise or wasted effort depends upon the player. When you see an accomplished golfer drive a ball you will be likely to say that there is a complete absence of effort of any kind. Yet the fact remains that practically every ounce of strength in his body is behind that shot. Therein lies the secret of good golf; the ability to expend effort without being conscious of the fact. The good player seldom realizes the great power he is putting into a stroke.

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The greater part of this strength comes from the thighs, back, and shoulders. The wrists, hands, and arms appear to do most of the work, yet as a matter of fact they represent but a small part of the real power. These are simply the propelling power. Practically all muscles in the body have certain allotted work to perform in the golf stroke. And if each set is to function properly there must be a just distribution of work. This means proper bodily balance from beginning to end of the golf swing.

All the muscles of the body should work in perfect harmony. And perfect body balance is the direct result of muscles that are in harmony. Suppose your balance is correct at the address and remains so during the greater part of the back swing. This means that the muscles are functioning as they should.

Then suppose that things suddenly occur which throw you off balance; your left leg may crumple up so that you are left nothing to stand on or perhaps your head drops toward the left shoulder. The result is that your

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body is now made up of a number of sets of muscles in active conflict with each other. The power of the muscles has become neutralized and the result is wasted effort (Fig. 66).

The beginner struggling in the throes of the problem of just what constitutes proper bodily balance may perhaps accuse the muscles of being ignorant of the work they are supposed to perform. Doubtless they are in cases where a goodly number of golf faults have become a habit. However, education and practice will set them right; in which case it will be a question of educating these muscles from the unnatural to that which is the perfectly natural.

Even a man who does not know golf can recognize the proper balance of the body when he sees it. In this connection I once had an interesting experience with Moretti, the sculptor. Moretti wished to make a statue of a golfer, but not knowing the slightest thing about the game he came to me for some information as to just how a golfer looks in action.

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There happened to be a golf beginner standing close by with a club in his hand, and this man was asked to go through the swing. He did as requested, and finished his back swing with his body considerably off balance. Morretti shook his head; he instinctively knew that this wasn't right. Then he turned to me and asked me to go through the swing. I did so, and as I swung to the right he impetuously jumped forward and grabbed me saying:

“Hold that. It is superb.”

Muscles may be just as much in conflict when relaxed as when tense. Indeed during the greater part of the golf swing they should be relaxed. There is only one time when their full strength is called for and that is in hitting the ball. There are many possibilities for wasted energy during the course of the swing.

Take, for example, the death grip which many beginners take on the club; this is wholly wasted effort. Indeed, some golfers expend such a great amount of energy on the back swing that by the time the club reaches the ball, the over-taxed muscles have little



FIG. 66

Showing a number of golfing faults. Several different sets of muscles in the body are in active conflict with each other

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strength left to offer. As a matter of fact, the back swing should be a period of relaxation. It is simply winding up the body. This may be compared to winding up a piece of string, the down swing representing the release.

Likewise, irrespective of whether muscles are tense or relaxed, they are working just the same. And this brings us to the very common fault of mistiming. Let us suppose that you are addressing the ball, ready for a full golf swing. Just stop and imagine that the prospective swing is a wheel; with the usual rim, spokes, and hub. The club head represents the rim, the shaft is a spoke, and the hub your body. The action of both the back and forward swing should be that of a spinning wheel (Figs. 67-68).

Clearly enough the rim of this wheel has to travel faster than does the hub. But even though the hub does travel more slowly it has to spin around with it. The two must spin around with it. The two must spin in harmony. And exactly this same principle applies to golf. Suppose, for example, that

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by the time the club is half-way back, the left heel still remains solidly upon the ground.



FIG. 67

A demonstration of the common fault of mistiming. The hub and rim of the wheel fail to travel together

This means that the muscles are not functioning as they should and a conflict between them has started. A harmonious spin of the rim and hub would bring the heel off the ground.

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In the same way, if at this stage of the swing, the shoulders have not followed the rim to the right, this also means mistiming. The



FIG. 68

Correct timing. The hub and rim spin in harmony

body has an important part to play in the golf stroke and it should not be allowed to lag behind the arms. This is a rather common tendency, due to the fact that the arms are the faster moving parts. On the other hand, the

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right shoulder should not beat the arms around. The hub and the rim should work in constant unison from the address to the finish of the swing.

TALK XV
SLICING AND HOOKING

TALK XV

SLICING AND HOOKING

FORTUNATE is the golfer who has never learned the meaning of slicing and hooking the ball. The average golfer is quite satisfied with the world in general when he sees the ball travel straight down the course in an undeviating line, for that is the result he has played for. If, however, the ball sheers off to the right or left, gloom settles down upon him, and he knows by either token that his swing has not been faultless. Something has gone wrong, although he is probably at sea as to just what this may have been.

Of course a slice or hook may be either intentional or unintentional. An accomplished golfer in order to drop the ball in a certain spot will often intentionally play a slice

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or hook. And when a man knows exactly what he is doing, and the precise manner of



FIG. 69

A grip that will slice the ball

getting this desired result, hooking and slicing cannot be classed as evils.

The fact remains, however, that with the average golfer slicing and hooking are distinct evils, and they remain such just so long as they

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pop up when not wanted. As a matter of fact, neither slicing nor hooking have any place in



FIG. 70

A grip that will hook the ball

the entirely natural game of golf. If one sticks strictly to the game as nature intends it should be played, you will not do either of these.

If you know the reasons for certain faults in

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golf it is fairly easy to overcome them. The faults that play all the havoc are those which you cannot find the reasons for, with the result



FIG. 71

The slicer's left-hand grip

that you keep on with them and they become more and more of a habit and just so much more difficult to break in the end. On the other hand, if you know that a certain definite

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action will bring about a certain result and have the whole thing clearly in mind, you can intentionally bring these actions in play now



FIG. 72

The puller's left-hand grip

and then as you wish without the disadvantage of making them a habit. Slicing and hooking are excellent examples of what I mean.

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Among the most common reasons for slicing is that of rolling the forearms too soon. This is sometimes incorrectly referred to as turning the wrists. As a matter of fact, it is not the wrists that turn; it is the forearms. A great many beginners are erroneously taught to roll the forearms too soon and this is one reason why slicing is so general (Figs. 27-28).

Remember that in swinging back and then down upon the ball you want to make as large an arc as is conveniently possible. In the back swing the club should travel directly back from the ball for some distance instead of being lifted up from the line of flight. In hitting any object, the natural thing is to start directly away from it.

In the case of the back swing in golf, the forearms of course roll naturally of their own accord, but if you will examine the point at which they start rolling during the course of a perfect swing, you will find that it is farther back than you probably supposed. Take Vardon's swing for example. Vardon's club travels back about a yard before percep-



FIG. 73
Finish of a slice



FIG. 74
Finish of a hook

SLICING AND HOOKING

tibly leaving the line of flight. Likewise, it is not until then that the forearms begin rolling over to any extent.

Both slicing and hooking may come from the manner in which you grip the club. In the case of the chronic slicer's grip, the face of the club turns upward at the time of impact with the ball. The fault in this instance is usually with the left hand; the fingers of this hand are in plain view when in reality they should be just hidden. With the chronic hooker, however, the left hand is turned to the opposite extreme, while the fingers of the right hand are too much in view (Figs. 69-70-71-72). Half-way between these two extremes is the correct grip.

Slicing is often associated with hitting the ball with the heel of the club. When you find yourself heeling, you instinctively draw the club toward you and a slice is the natural result. In this matter of heeling you have combating you both the centrifugal force carrying the club head outward and the fact that your arms naturally try to straighten at



FIG. 75

The way to finish without slicing or hooking

SLICING AND HOOKING

the moment of impact. It is wise to make allowances for these.

As a matter of fact this centrifugal force will pretty well take care of itself if you will simply address the ball with the toe of the club. As a result of this you will be likely to hit the ball exactly in the centre of the club.

TALK XVI
METHODS OF CURING FAULTS

TALK XVI

METHODS OF CURING FAULTS

THE acquiring of a perfect golf swing may be a long and painstaking process. And then just when you think you have it mastered, some single obtrusive fault may come up that spoils it all. If any one part of the golf swing goes wrong, the whole structure is likely to topple down like a ton of bricks. The cure is to recognize and then overcome the faults as they appear. And so long as you do recognize them, the cure is usually more simple than appears at first sight. I will enumerate a few.

In a previous talk upon the subject of slicing, I have said that this common evil is often associated with heeling the ball. And heeling can be very easily overcome. The reason

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for hitting the ball with the heel of the club is for the most part the centrifugal force which carries the club head outward during the course of the swing.

I will explain this more fully. The club head on the down swing should follow exactly the same path that it has taken to the top of the swing. However, there is a considerable amount of weight to the club head, and in sweeping down fast from the top of the swing, this generates centrifugal force which does its best to take the club head through a path outside of the one traversed in the up swing. If this force is strong enough to amount to anything the result is that you hit the ball with the heel of the club head.

If you are heeling the ball to any extent I would advise as a cure that you change your tactics in addressing the ball. Instead of addressing with the middle of the striking face of the club head, address with the toe of the club. At the same time make up your mind that when the moment of impact comes it will be the toe that connects with the ball. You



FIG. 76

A cure for heeling. Drive the near ball without disturbing the other

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may be surprised to find that the part of the club head with which the ball actually connects is usually the exact centre, and the result is a fine, straight ball (Fig. 64).

If addressing the ball with the toe of the club doesn't cure your heeling, try another method. Go off by yourself to some corner of the links and do a little practising. Place two balls on the ground before you, these three or four inches apart. The ball nearest to you is the one which you intend to play. Proceed to drive it down the course without taking into account the other ball. If there is any great amount of centrifugal force generated in your downswing, what really happens is that you hit both balls at once (Fig. 76).

The thing for you to do next is to make up your mind that you will drive the near ball without disturbing the other. This is exceptionally good practice and after a certain number of tries the far ball won't bother you in the least. All of which means that you are being cured of heeling.

Another common tendency among golf



FIG. 77

Keeping down the elbow by the aid of a handkerchief in the armpit

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beginners is that of raising the right elbow as the club travels to the top of the swing. This is awkward and throws one quite off balance. Sometimes you see a golfer with his right elbow raised in the air almost on a line with the shoulders. Keep the elbow down, perhaps not rigid against the side but very nearly so. If you find that the elbow persists in raising up, take out your handkerchief, poke it between your upper right arm and side of the body, under the arm pit and address the ball. Then make up your mind that you will go through the golf swing without allowing the handkerchief to drop to the ground. This is entirely possible. Of course in the ordinary swing, your arm would not be as rigidly against your side as in this case. At the same time, this handkerchief stunt is very good practice, and will get you into the habit of keeping the right elbow down (Fig. 77).

I will now offer a little suggestion for the man who is not following through properly with his iron shots. Lay two balls on the ground, a few inches apart, both in the line of



FIG. 78

Hit both balls on the same shot. This will make
you follow through

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flight. Then take your mashie and make up your mind that you are going to send both those balls down the course on the same shot (Fig. 78).

It may not look possible at first sight but as a matter of fact it is entirely so. Common faults in playing iron shots are to turn over the striking face of the club and also not allow the club head to continue its allotted distance in the line of flight after the ball has been hit.

An analysis of the problem of hitting the two balls on the same shot makes it clear that to be successful you will have to keep your club well down in the line of flight and not let it sheer up and off to the left. You put your reasoning into execution with the result that you get both balls, and at the same time learn the feel of a perfect follow through. This is very good practice.

TALK XVII
THIS BRINGS US TO PUTTING

TALK XVII

THIS BRINGS US TO PUTTING

I HAVE said that certain movements in the game of golf are fundamental. And these comprise about nine-tenths of the game. There is only one correct swing, however, and if you deviate from that in any way you will not play good golf.

In a general way, golf may be divided into essentials and non-essentials. More or less is said, to be sure, about the difference in golfing form among various leading players, but you will find that as a matter of fact there is really very little difference. When it comes to fundamentals, the form of all the best players is practically the same. I have said this before in our talks but it is a point which will stand plenty of repetition.

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It is in the non-essentials that these men differ. The golf grip is one example of this. One man uses the overlapping grip, another the natural grip. And likely enough both of these men play excellent golf. Although I personally consider the natural grip the better of the two, the truth of the matter is that the style of grip does not matter greatly and this because it is one of the non-essentials of golf.

You will find on the other hand that the best players are one as regards what constitutes the best swing. They may not say so, but if you will make a close study of their respective swings you will find this true.

This brings us to putting. Here again you find a wide divergence of form among various players. One man putts in one way, another in a totally different manner. And both get results. The reason for this is that form in putting is a non-essential. Strictly speaking it is not golf form at all. One may even go through some entirely unnatural movements in putting and still be successful, although of



FIG. 79

Good putting practice. Lay about a half dozen balls around the cup

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course it is always best to stand as naturally as possible.

As one example of the manner in which putting may differ from the long game, take the matter of following the ball with your eyes. After starting the ball upon a long drive, the entirely natural and therefore correct thing to do is to look up and follow its long flight with your eyes. In putting, on the other hand, one can often get the best results by using his ears instead of his eyes, and in this way; after hitting the ball keep your eyes glued upon the spot where the ball has rested and do not take them away until you hear the ball clinking into the cup—or not clinking, as the case may be.

This tip is by no means a panacea and with some players it is fatal as it means concentrating on an unnatural thing. The instinct is to watch results. Many do this too soon, so that to look at the place the ball left is good discipline for those who look forward too soon. It need not be adhered to permanently.

Another essential is this: before playing the



FIG. 80

Military stance. Heels together, legs straight, toes parallel with line of hole, and head directly over ball

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ball, your eye must be on the exact spot where the club head will meet it. A common mistake is that of eyeing the top of the ball. But the most important essential of all is a feeling of perfect confidence that you will sink the ball in the cup, for a short putt or lay it dead in a long one and also perhaps, the ability to take it all in good humor if by any chance you fail to do so.

Confidence of course is in more or less direct proportion to possibility, and for this reason a man cannot tackle a single difficult long putt with the same degree of confidence that he can when this distance is divided into two putts. And when a man plays for two putts in this way there is always a chance that he may make it in one after all.

A great deal of practice in putting is quite essential and one of the best suggestions I can offer is this: find a deserted green and lay about a half dozen balls in a horseshoe around the cup, about three or four feet from its centre. Then practise your approach shots from the edge of the green. But instead of



FIG. 81

Orthodox stance. Right foot is advanced, right shoulder depressed and greater part of body weight is on the right leg

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playing to sink the ball into the cup, play to land just inside the circle of balls surrounding it (Fig. 79).

There are several different kinds of stances used in putting. One of these is known as the military stance. In this case, the heels are together, the legs straight, toes are parallel with line of the hole, and the head of the player is directly over the ball (Fig. 80). Another method is the orthodox stance. Here the right foot is advanced, the right shoulder depressed and most of the weight of the body is on the right leg (Fig. 81).

A third method is the crouching stance. This is much like the orthodox stance except that in this case the right arm rests on the leg and the club is held short (Fig. 82). Any of these can be used and perhaps even with variations, but in any case your position must feel natural and easy.

Last, but not always least, the condition of one's eyes may have much to do with effective putting. In the majority of cases the master eye is the right eye. This means that you can



FIG. 82

Crouching stance. Much like orthodox stance, except that right arm rests on leg and club is held short.

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see more effectively and in a straighter line with this eye than you can with the left. The vision of the master eye must not be obstructed in any way.

The stance whereby you bend down on the right knee may be well enough if your right eye is the master. But if your left is the master eye, the vision is likely to be somewhat obstructed in this position, and you would do well to change it to suit, viz. both eyes equal distance from the ball.

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